

Wiretapping Common During War

By Drew Pearson

The revelation that Mrs. Roosevelt's phone was tapped during the war by Army Intelligence will not surprise those familiar with the eavesdropping activities of the Army, Navy and every other intelligence agency at that time — except the FBI.

The inside reason why Mrs. Roosevelt's wires were tapped was because she insisted on maintaining contacts with liberal friends and labor leaders. By no stretch of the imagination could they be considered either Nazis or Communists. But in the opinion of those operating the intelligence agencies, they were suspect anyway.

During World War II, Naval Intelligence once stationed two cars of agents outside my house. I have forgotten why. When Congressman James McGranery of Philadelphia, later Attorney General, heard about it from one of my neighbors, he phoned Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox. Neither Knox nor I knew about the Navy's spying, and he promptly had the agents removed.

If Sen. Ed Long (D-Mo.), chairman of the Senate committee investigating eaves-

dropping, is worried about current Internal Revenue wiretapping, he should review what happened during the war.

The OSS, predecessor of the CIA, tapped wires at the drop of a telephone. Army and Navy Intelligence couldn't sleep at night unless they had half a hundred rooms wired for sound. Donald Nelson, head of the War Production Board, once got a recording of a military session at which the brass hats planned to take over U.S. industrial production. Don used the recording to show President Roosevelt what Gen. B. B. Somervell and the military were up to and FDR put them in their place.

Even good old Harold Ickes once bugged the room of his associate on the Public Works Board, Chip Robert, when Chip and Marvin McIntyre were entertaining ladies in an Atlanta Hotel.

J. Edgar Hoover's FBI did very little wiretapping in those days, only when authorized by a Federal court or the Attorney General. But every other intelligence agency had a field day.

Electronic Refinements

Today, wiretapping has become much easier, due to electronic refinements. It's now possible to listen in on telephone conversations without putting an actual tap on the wire. And it's reported that a

TV camera will soon be available by which detectives or law enforcement officers, or suspicious husbands, can peer into private rooms.

In recent years, also, there's been quite a rash of electronic eavesdropping by rival business firms. This column once revealed the charge by Hazel Bishop that her chief competitor, Revlon, had wiretapped conversations regarding the TV show, "S64,000 Question," which prompted Revlon to snatch the show away from Hazel Bishop.

In the Senate investigation over Internal Revenue wiretapping, Commissioner Sheldon Cohen deserves credit for issuing a strong circular instruction to all personnel June 19 that there was to be no illegal wiretapping even on underworld suspects. They, too, have their constitutional rights.

Though Commissioner Cohen admitted to Sen. Long that his agents had engaged in some illegal use of electronic devices, it should also be noted that some of these gadgets can be used quite legally.

For instance, when tax agents raid a gambling casino to collect Uncle Sam's share of the take, miniature transmitters are planted in front and in the rear of the casino

in order to alert police if the operators try to crash out. This is not illegal.

Tax agents also explain that it was not illegal to use two-way mirrors in about twenty Revenue offices. Furthermore, there was good reason for it — namely, to protect witnesses asked to identify dangerous criminals.

Attorney General Katzenbach recently testified that the Justice Department had "lost" 25 informants on underworld leaders, later found drowned wearing cement boots. So the two-way mirrors were used to spot unsuspecting gangsters.

Out of 900 Internal Revenue offices, 28 were bugged, tax agents explain, and these were in intelligence areas where people were suspected of fraud.

Bugging rooms and using two-way mirrors is not illegal. Nevertheless, following Sen. Long's investigation, all such devices have been removed.

Note: Rep. Carlton Sickles (D-Md.) believes the police should get as up-to-date as James Bond, should start using modern technology in fighting crime. The Congressman doesn't want them to engage in illegal wiretapping, but does think that American police haven't caught up with the techniques of "Agent 007."

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